



Remarks

Reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully requested.

Claims 40-43 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Claims 17-23, 25-33, and 35-43 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,293,374 of *Eidson* ("*Eidson '374*") and U.S. Patent No. 5,978,753 of *Eidson* ("*Eidson '753*") and U.S. Patent No. 6,236,623 of *Read et al.* ("*Read*") and U.S. Patent No. 5,887,029 of *Husted et al.* ("*Husted*").

The examiner objected to Figure 1 because it does not include a reference 12 for the communication device. In response, applicant submits herewith a corrected drawing sheet including Figure 1.

The Examiner has rejected claims 40-43 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite and has suggested using "first/second" in connection with the modules and links recited therein. In response, applicant has amended claims 40-43 in accordance with examiner suggestions.

The examiner has rejected claims 17-23, 25-33, and 35-43 as being obvious in view of *Eidson '374* and *Eidson '753* and *Read* and *Husted*. The examiner has stated that if the independent claims set forth the limitation that each module can be operated outside of its instrument bay without any change to the underlying communication and time synchronization then the claims would be allowable over the art of record. In response, applicant has amended claim 17 to include the limitation of "each module performing a function such that the functions are coordinated by a synchronized time in the clocks thereby enabling one or more of the modules to be located outside of the instrument bay with no change to an underlying functionality in the modules." Applicant has amended

claims 30 and 40 to include similar limitations. It is therefore submitted that amended claims 17, 30 and 40 include the limitation suggested by the examiner and are allowable over *Eidson '374* and *Eidson '753* and *Read and Husted*.

Given that claims 18-23 and 25-29 depend from amended claim 17 and that claims 31-33 and 35-39 depend from amended claim 30 and that claims 41-43 depend from amended claim 40 it is submitted that claims 18-23, 25-29, 31-33, 35-39, and 41-43 are allowable over the art of record.

It is respectfully submitted that in view of the amendments and arguments set forth above, the applicable objections and rejections have been overcome.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1078 for any matter in connection with this response, including any fee for extension of time, which may be required.

Respectfully submitted,

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